



CACREP adopts new standards

The Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) officially adopted revisions to its accreditation standards on July 19 in Alexandria, Va. The revised standards, known familiarly as the 2009 Standards, will go into effect on July 1, 2009. Programs applying for accreditation prior to this date will continue to be reviewed under the 2001 Standards.

Adoption of the 2009 Standards is the culmination of a multiyear revision process that incorporates significant changes in relation to professional identity issues, core curriculum requirements and student learning outcomes. To assist with the revision process, the CACREP Board charged a six-member committee to conduct a thorough review of the current standards and to seek feedback from all appropriate communities of interest, including counselor educators, higher education administrators, counseling practitioners, counselor credentialing boards, professional counseling associations, consumers of counseling services, counseling students and prospective students. The CACREP Board selected members of the Standards Revision Committee (SRC) from an applicant pool. The SRC included Tom Davis, Jo-Ann Lipford Sanders, Rick Gressard, Mary Alice Bruce, Patrick Akos and Harry Daniels.

A full review of the CACREP accreditation standards occurs on a seven-year cycle. Revisions seek to reflect not only the current training needs of counselors but the anticipated future needs as well. Additionally, the current and future needs of the higher education communities that use the standards for quality assurance reviews are considered. The periodic review of the CACREP standards ensures continued relevancy of the standards in the preparation of today's and tomorrow's counseling professionals,

while simultaneously providing higher education institutions with a mechanism for demonstrating accountability in the education being provided.

Three questions received focused attention from the CACREP Board, the SRC and the public throughout the 2009 revision process:

1. How can the standards strengthen the professional identity of counselors graduating from CACREP programs?
2. What, if any, revisions should be made to the core curriculum requirements?
3. How should the standards be written to include student learning outcome requirements?

Examples of revisions reflected in the 2009 Standards and addressing each of these questions are provided below.

Professional identity

The desire to strengthen the professional identity of both counselor preparation programs and faculty through the 2009 Standards arose from CACREP Board discussions regarding the mixed messages students receive when the majority of faculty teaching in a counseling program hold terminal degrees from other professions and when their degrees or programs use titles other than counseling (for example, psychology). To address this issue, the 2009 Standards delineate that a doctoral degree in counselor education is the required degree for core faculty teaching in CACREP programs.

Recognizing the impact that this requirement will have on many programs, the CACREP Board has included a codicil that the counselor education degree requirement applies only to new faculty who are hired directly out of their doctoral programs and not to individuals with related degrees who have taught full time in counseling programs prior to July 1, 2013. Over time, it is believed that

this new requirement will ensure that counselors are training counselors, while still allowing related professionals to participate in counselor preparation and share expertise through noncore faculty (e.g., adjunct, affiliate) positions.

A second way the professional identity issue is addressed in the 2009 Standards is in the restructuring of the entry-level standards into three sections — Section I: The Learning Environment, Section II: Professional Identity and Section III: Clinical Practice. This structure is intended to assist programs in defining where counselors learn, what they learn and how they carry their knowledge into practice. Each of these sections focuses, respectively, on clearly identifying the responsibilities of the program in relation to its resources, its curriculum and its clinical practice expectations.

In particular, Section II: Professional Identity outlines the common core curriculum or requisite knowledge areas needed to become a counselor regardless of desired work setting. This is followed by Section III: Clinical Practice, which outlines the expectations for every student's supervised practice experiences. A new addition to the 2009 Standards, designed to ensure appropriate counseling supervision during these skill development experiences, is the requirement to develop a supervision contract for each student. This contract defines the roles and responsibilities of the faculty supervisor, the site supervisor and the student during practicum and internship.

Curricular requirements

Survey research conducted in the beginning stages of the standards revision process supported the validity of CACREP's eight common core curricular areas. The eight core areas have served as the cornerstone of CACREP's curricular requirements since the organization's founding in 1981. During the 2009

revision process, however, the eight core areas were augmented to include new knowledge requirements in:

- Theories and etiology of addictions and addictive behaviors, including strategies for prevention, intervention and treatment
- The effects of crises, disasters and other trauma-causing events on individuals of all ages, including theories and models of crisis intervention and suicide prevention

Inclusion of the addictions-related standards in the core curriculum reflects the understanding that counselors in all program areas — not just those choosing specialized training in this type of work — are involved in prevention and intervention work surrounding addictions and addictive behaviors. Infusion of the crisis preparedness language throughout the standards was supported by a grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, due in part to the recognition of the important role of “counselors as responders” during national emergencies such as Hurricane Katrina.

The 2009 Standards additionally reflect changes in the structure of specific program area curricula through the merging of the Community Counseling and Mental Health Counseling Standards into a single program area titled Clinical Mental Health Counseling; the merging

of the College Counseling and Student Affairs Standards into a single program area titled Student Affairs and College Counseling; and creation of a new program area in Addiction Counseling. The 2009 Standards delete the program area for Gerontological Counseling because few counselor education departments have sought accreditation for this specialization.

Learning outcomes

The program area standards (e.g., school counseling; clinical mental health counseling; marriage, couple and family counseling) were modified to be student learning outcomes-based standards. Although the core curriculum standards remain input-based, meaning the emphasis is on the content to be covered, the program area standards emphasize the knowledge and skills that students must demonstrate prior to completion of a program. The evidence that programs produce in relation to the outcome-based standards will be direct evidence of the knowledge, skills and abilities students have gained during their preparation as counselors.

The shift to student learning outcomes-based standards in the program area standards is representative of a larger shift occurring in higher education in relation to transparency and accountability. Across the United States, colleges and universities are being challenged on

the local, state and federal levels to produce evidence that their students are developing the knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviors to ensure success in a variety of disciplines.

The program area standards in the 2009 Standards consist of knowledge standards and skills/practices standards. As part of the accreditation process, programs will demonstrate on an individual student and aggregate level that students are achieving the requisite knowledge and skills specified in the program area standards.

CACREP is excited about the 2009 Standards. The CACREP Board believes that the 2009 Standards will effectively guide the preparation of today's and tomorrow's counselors for the professional challenges and opportunities they will encounter. A complete copy of the 2009 Standards can be downloaded at cacrep.org. ♦

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